

**CITY OF ROCKVILLE  
COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT  
STAFF REPORT**

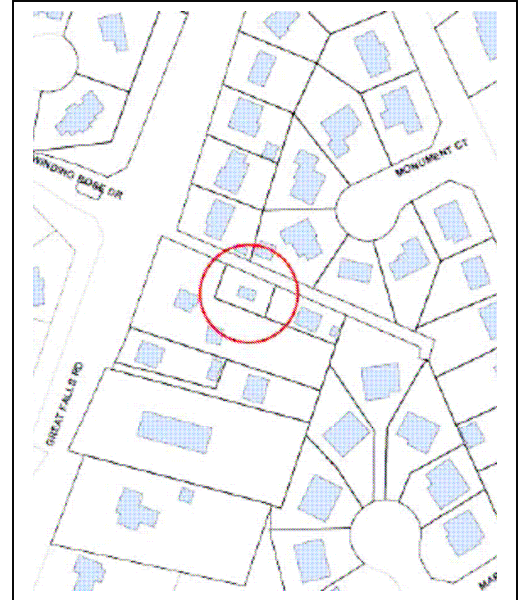
**TO:** Planning Commission

**FROM:** Jim Wasilak, Chief of Planning

**PLANNER:** Robin D. Ziek, Historic  
Preservation Planner

**DATE:** January 19, 2010

**SUBJECT:** Historic Designation:  
MAP2010-00108  
The Bessie Hill House  
602 Great Falls Road



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**RECOMMENDATION:** Historic District zoning would comply with associated master plans, including the 1986 *Historic Resources Management Plan*.

**REQUEST:** Make recommendation to the Mayor and Council regarding the implications for changing the zoning at the subject property from R-90 to R-90 HD, with respect to relevant master plans.

**RELEVANT ISSUES:**

- Historic character of property was identified in 1986. Historic designation would meet expectations laid out in city master planning documents.
- Substandard property is a long-standing condition, and has no impact as such on the surrounding properties with its existing size, scale, massing.
- Property should be considered “grandfathered” into the zone, even if the existing house were demolished. The Planning Commission would establish site-specific building standards with the approval of a subdivision plat.

**PROJECT / SITE INFORMATION:**

Location: Planning Area 4, West End-Woodley Gardens East West

Applicant: Mayor and Council

Property owner: John B. Stevens and Jonathan D. Stevens  
7923 Carriage Drive  
Severn, MD 21144

Land Use Designation: Residential  
Zoning District: R-90  
Parcel Area: 4,800 sf  
Building Floor Area: 820 sf

Surrounding Land Use and Zoning			
Location	Zoning	Planned Land Use	Existing Use
North	R-90	R-90	Residential
South	R-90	R-90	Residential
East	R-90	R-90	Residential
West	R-90	R-90	Residential



**PREVIOUS RELATED ACTIONS:**

HDC Evaluation of Significance on November 19, 2009 (see Attachment A [HDC staff report]; and Attachment B [HDC meeting minutes]).

**ANAYLSIS:**

The Bessie Hill House is included as entry #104 of the *Historic Buildings Catalog* published in 1989. The *Catalog* identified a number of properties that could be considered for historic designation, but which were as of 1989, outside of a designated district. Therefore, by reference to the *Historic Buildings Catalog*, the subject property is mentioned as having potential historic significance in both the *Comprehensive Master Plan* (p. 8-6) and the current neighborhood plan, *West End/Woodley Gardens East West Neighborhood Plan* 1989, p. 28.

In addition, the property is discussed in the *Historic Resources Management Plan* (1986), under "Context 5: Development as Montgomery County Seat: 1825-1873." Discussion includes identifying this African American enclave at the southwestern limits of the town, as being of similar significance as the kinship community known as "Haiti" on Martin's Lane at the northern edge of the town (see #15 page 89, and page 88). This *Plan* also notes that archaeological resources are expected at these locations as well.

The parcel for 602 Great Falls Road was created by deed in 1902, when the owners of 600 Great Falls Road deeded approximately ¼ acre of their property to their daughter, Bessie Hill. Her property was further divided amongst her children so that, by 1945, there were three separate residential parcels along this alley, including 602 Great Falls.

**Zoning Compliance:** The property is substandard in the zone. It has 4, 800 sf but the R-90 zone requires 9,000 sf minimum lot size. The house is located in the middle of the lot, and it doesn't meet the front yard/back yard setbacks of the zone. It does not have direct access from a public road. An informal alley provides access, which is an extension of the driveway for 600 Great Falls Road.

**Traffic / Transportation - Parking:** There is a driveway along the south side of the property and two cars may park here off of the alley.

**REQUIRED FINDINGS:** The subject property has been identified as having potential for historic district designation in several city planning documents of long-standing. The historic designation zoning would permit rehabilitation of the property under the auspices of the Historic District Commission, and would provide the option of applying for historic tax credits (federal, state, local) to assist in this effort.

**PUBLIC OUTREACH:** The Planning Commission agenda was posted on the City's web site, and post card notices were sent to all properties within 750 feet of the property.

**CONCLUSION:** The Planning Commission should recommend Historic District zoning at this property, on the basis that this complies with relevant master plans and will safeguard the heritage of the City.

Attachment A: HDC staff report

Attachment B: HDC minutes November 19, 2009